

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 841

By Harwell

A RESOLUTION to congratulate Head Coach Kevin Stallings and the Vanderbilt Commodores on winning the 2012 Southeastern Conference Men's Basketball Tournament Championship.

WHEREAS, the Tennessee General Assembly is pleased to specially honor and commend those extraordinary athletic teams that, through their magnificent exploits, bring honor to Tennessee and serve as exceptional ambassadors of this State; and

WHEREAS, the Vanderbilt University Men's Basketball Team is one such estimable team that achieved an extraordinary level of success during the 2011-2012 season and captured the Southeastern Conference (SEC) Tournament Championship for the second time in school history and for the first time since 1951; and

WHEREAS, a storied basketball program respected from coast-to-coast for its offensive firepower and tenacious defense as well as for the fact that it boasts a 99% graduation rate since 1979, the Vanderbilt Commodores finished their conference schedule with a record of 10-6 before beginning the SEC Tournament at New Orleans Arena in New Orleans, Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, receiving a first round bye, the Commodores began their impressive run at the SEC tourney against the Georgia Bulldogs and overcame a rough first half with stingy defense and a determined focus to pound the pups in the second half and claim a 63-41 victory; and

WHEREAS, advancing to the semi-finals for the third straight season, Vandy started slowly in the first half but burned the net off the goal from beyond the three-point line in the final twenty minutes to defeat Ole Miss as sharpshooters John Jenkins and Brad Tinsley combined for five treys to clinch a 65-53 Commodore victory; and

WHEREAS, entering the championship game for only the second time in school history and the first time in six decades, the Commodores faced the same foe as in 1951, the Wildcats of the University of Kentucky, who were ranked as the #1 team in the country with an overall record of 32-1 and a twenty-four game winning streak; and

WHEREAS, having faced Kentucky twice during the regular season, the 'Dores were undaunted, after having lost each contest by single digits, but also believed they had yet to play their best basketball and were determined to play as hard as they could to claim the championship; and

WHEREAS, playing in an arena filled to the rafters with Kentucky fans, the fearless Vanderbilt Commodores came to play as the two teams fought to a 37-37 tie at the half, as Vandy stars Jeffrey Taylor scored thirteen first half points, John Jenkins hit three treys, and big man Festus Ezeli gave Kentucky's Anthony Davis more than he could handle in the paint; and

WHEREAS, in the second half Kentucky went up 54-49 and appeared ready to take control of the game until the 'Dores anchored down on defense, playing a suffocating zone, as Vandy went on a magical 16-2 run over the last five minutes of the game to end the Wildcats three-month-long winning streak; and

WHEREAS, Vandy freshman Kedron Johnson of Lewisburg, Tennessee, put the Commodores in front for good when he converted a three-point play, having taken the ball to the hoop on an amazing lay-up; and

WHEREAS, winning by a score of 71-64, Vanderbilt used an incredible zone defense to deny the Kentucky victory as the Wildcats did not score a field goal for the final 8:04 and shot a field goal percentage of just 35.9% for the game; and

WHEREAS, for his sterling efforts, Commodore John Jenkins of Hendersonville, Tennessee, was named SEC Tournament Most Valuable Player, having averaged over 18 points per game during the tournament; and

WHEREAS, the esteemed members of this championship basketball team include Festus Ezeli, Lance Goulbourne, Aaron Noll, Jeffery Taylor, Steve Tchiengang, Brad Tinsley,

John Jenkins, Jordan Smart, Kyle Fuller, Rod Odom, Josh Henderson, James Siakam, Kedren Johnson, Shelby Moats, and Dai-Jon Parker; and

WHEREAS, no strangers to honors or accolades, Vandy Senior forward Steve Tcheingang was named to the SEC's Community Service Team and Commodores Jeffery Taylor and John Jenkins were named first team All-Southeastern Conference performers, as Jenkins led the SEC as scoring leader for the second consecutive season while Taylor was also named to the SEC's All-Defensive Team with a number of experts calling him the best defensive forward in the nation; and

WHEREAS, a Senior class that will go down in Vanderbilt basketball lore as one of the best ever to take the court at historic Memorial Gym, this special squad of players includes Festus Ezeli, Brad Tinsley, Lance Goulbourne, Steve Tchiengang, and Jeffery Taylor with Mr. Taylor joining the pantheon of all-time Vandy legends as the Commodores' second-leading career scorer; and

WHEREAS, this tremendous team is led by Head Coach Kevin Stallings who laid the groundwork for this year's SEC championship by sharing with these young men his substantial knowledge of basketball, his many years of coaching and athletic experience, and his passion both for the sport of basketball and for excellence in every endeavor; and

WHEREAS, in addition to the superb leadership of Head Coach Stallings, the Commodores enjoy the outstanding coaching and assistance of a tremendous staff, namely David Cason, Brad Frederick, Dan Muller, and Tom Richardson; and

WHEREAS, the Vanderbilt Commodores men's basketball team is also ably served by Mr. David Williams, II, Athletic Director; Mr. Brock Williams, Director of Sport Operations; Mr. Dan Cage, Assistant Director of Basketball Operations; Mr. Curtis Turner, Strength and Conditioning Coach; Mr. Shannon Gordon, Athletic Trainer; Mr. Neal Clark, Academic Counselor; Mr. Chris Meriwether, Graduate Manager; and Ms. Molly Blatt, Administrative Assistant; and

WHEREAS, the basketball players at Vanderbilt University epitomize all that is good in today's student-athlete, as they have achieved a premier level of success in competition and academics. The perseverance, determination, work ethic, and talent of this group of young men

not only made possible a championship basketball season, but also surely bode well for their success in every future enterprise; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly finds it appropriate to acknowledge and applaud the Vanderbilt University Commodores and specially recognize their extraordinary achievements both on and off the basketball court; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED SEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we honor and congratulate the coaches, staff, and members of the Vanderbilt University Men's Basketball Team on winning the 2012 Southeastern Conference Tournament Championship and wish the Commodores well in all their future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.